MEMORIAL OF NATHANIEL W. TAYLOR, D. D.
THREE SERMONS

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Memorial of

NATHANIEL W. TAYLOR, D. D.

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MEMORIAL

OF

NATHANIEL W. TAYLOR, D. D.

THREE SERMONS:

BY

LEONARD BACON, D. D.,

PASTOR OF THE CENTER CHURCH;

SAMUEL W. S. DUTTON, D. D.,

PASTOR OF THE NORTH CHURCH;

GEORGE P. FISHER, A. M.,

PROFESSOR IN YALE COLLEGE.

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A SERMON

AT THE FUNERAL OF NATHANIEL W. TAYLOR, D. D.,

IN THE CENTER CHURCH, MARCH 12, 1858,

BY LEONARD BACON, D. D., PASTOR.

IF, in these obsequies, we might regard exclusively the grief that darkens the circle of domestic love and the wider circle of personal and private friendship, we could not but turn to some of those familiar themes of Christian consolation which are always fresh and bright in the hour of sorrow. But the grief which brings us together in this concourse, is something more than an ordinary sympathy with those who are following the remains of a husband and father to the grave. A great and honored institution of sacred learning is here to-day as a mourner. Hundreds of the public and official ministers of God's word—some of them veterans in the service—some of them in this assembly, and some far away in the remotest regions to which the intelligence of this bereavement has been conveyed on the lines of magnetic communication—feel in their hearts the breaking of the tie that bound them to their venerated teacher. Not the aged members of one church only, but all these churches, share in the bereavement. A great light has been extinguished: no, not extinguished, but removed to shine on us, henceforth, only from the historic past; removed to shine in that high and blessed sphere where "they that are wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars forever and ever."

The public relation, then, of these funeral services, leads me to select, as the subject of brief discourse, and as opening a field of thought appropriate to the occasion, the words in which our Saviour spoke of John the Baptist and his ministry.

JOHN V. 35. HE WAS A BURNING AND A SHINING LIGHT; AND YE WERE WILLING FOR A SEASON TO REJOICE IN HIS LIGHT.

The man of whom these words were spoken had a remarkable eminence as a minister of God and a preacher of righteousness. Not only was his special function one that made him eminent

above all ancient prophets, but he was eminent in the greatness of his gifts, in the power of his preaching, in the impression which he made upon his hearers, in the wide agitation and inquiry that were caused by his labors, and in the general movement of expectation and of personal repentance and reformation which he inaugurated, as preparatory to the coming of that new kingdom of God which the Christ, long promised and waited for, was then about to establish.

Christ himself is the light of the world—the true light—the sun of righteousness, with healing in his wings. He himself testifies, "I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." His coming into the world is the rising of an infinite light on them who were in darkness. He makes God, duty, sin, and the relations of the conscious soul to God and eternity, manifest in this dark world, and "that which maketh manifest is light." Where he is made known in the story of his incarnation, of his life on earth, of his death and resurrection, and of his ascension and kingdom—where he is made known in the divine beauty of his character, in the simple grandeur and power of his teaching, and in the ineffable condescension and ineffable glory of his redeeming work—there is light; for there God is revealed to men, and especially revealed to every attentive, trembling, penitent and believing soul.

Yet Christ says to his disciples, "Ye are the light of the world." They are the light of the world because he shines in them, and by means of them he makes God manifest to men. Every believer in Christ becomes a witness for him, and an instance and illustration of his power to save. Every believer in whom Christ is the hope of glory, and who, being in Christ, becomes a new creature, renewed in knowledge and true holiness, shines as a light in the world, holding forth the word of life. Christ is with them—he hath given them light; and therefore, where such men are, there God is known—there God's government, God's holy displeasure against sin, God's mercy and forgiveness, and all the soul's relations to the unseen world, are felt to be realities. Where such men are, an illumination from Christ strikes on the consciences of all who become acquainted with their principles, aims, sympathies and hopes. It is by virtue of their relation to Christ, and of the testimony which they give for him, that they are the light of the world.

Thus it becomes evident in what distinctive sense it is that every true minister of Christ is, in the measure of his gifts and of his fidelity in using them, a light in the world. His work is

to make Christ known—to call men to Christ—to overcome, by teaching and persuasion, the difficulties which hinder men from seeing Christ and feeling the attraction of the cross—to say, as John said, when he saw Jesus coming to him, "Behold the Lamb of God." His work is like that of Christ's immediate fore-runner, of whom we read, "The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe. He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light."

It is no misapplication, then, of the words in which the Saviour spoke of John the Baptist, if we use them as descriptive of that eminent preacher of Christ, whose work of almost half a century is now finished. We honor Christ when we say of his departed servant, "He was a burning and shining light, and ye were willing for a season to rejoice in that light."

More than forty-eight years ago, the First Church in this city, having rejoiced for a season in the stirring and powerful ministry of Moses Stuart, was deprived of its pastor by his removal to that different service in which he afterwards became so widely celebrated. Two years and three months elapsed before the vacancy was filled. At last, on the 8th of April, 1812, forty-six years ago, another pastor was ordained. He was the only candidate on whom, in all that period, the choice of the Church and Society had fallen. Once he had declined their invitation, and it was only in deference to a second and more harmonious call that he consented to accept the weighty charge.

It was indeed a weighty charge which he accepted. The brief ministry of his immediate predecessor had been attended by a memorable revival of religion, the first great awakening which this Church or this town had known in half a century. A revolution had been effected in the character of the Church and in its religious habits and sympathies, bringing it over to the side of what was then called "New Divinity." But the new order of things had hardly been consolidated. There were elements in the Church, which might easily have fermented into discord, and which required special gifts of power and wisdom in the pastor. A rash man, or a man of only moderate power in the pulpit, would have been wholly unfit to encounter the difficulties of the crisis. But the pastor who came to the task of guiding the Church, and of preaching the word of God to the people here, though he was a young man, less than five years a graduate, and though wholly unexperienced in pastoral responsibilities, brought with him a more than ordinary preparation for his work. In his study of theology he had had

the benefit of a special relation to his illustrious teacher. To say that he was a favorite pupil of President Dwight, does not adequately express the intimacy of the relation between them. Residing for two years in the family of the President, writing habitually from the dictation of those eloquent lips, he was not a mere amanuensis, nor merely a favorite pupil. In the relation thus established, there was the mutual attraction and mutual excitement of two powerful and kindred minds, unequal indeed in age and office, each differing from the other in many peculiarities of intellectual constitution, yet both alike profoundly interested in the great questions and debates which form the science of theology. It was in such an intimacy, and under such an influence, that the young pastor of this Church in 1812 had been trained to handle the great themes of God's revelation to men.

His ministry here was even more honored than that of his predecessor. Whatever lack of unanimity there may have been in regard to his settlement, all traces of it were soon removed by the unquestionable power and fidelity of his public ministrations and the suavity of his private intercourse with families and individuals. Those solid and massive discourses, full of linked and twisted logic, yet giving out at every point sharp flashes of electric fire, was just what was needed to carry on the work which his predecessor had begun. In the third year of his ministry, he began to see a great result of his labors. That year, 1815, was marked in the history of this Church, and in the religious history of the city and the College, as a year of awakening and of the conversion of souls to Christ. Another and more signal revival of God's work began in the year 1820, and continued till the close of the ensuing year. Some of those whose heads are now gray, remember with the deepest sensibility, that Sabbath, the last day of the year 1820, when more than seventy persons, old and young and of every condition in life, filled those aisles, as they came from their seats to take the vows of God upon them, and to enter into covenant with the Church. That was a day for which an earnest and willing pastor might well be willing to die. How many of that company, whom the pastor then counted with joy as the seals of his ministry, and whom he then welcomed to the communion of the saints on earth, have now welcomed him to the fellowship of the glorified in heaven!

His official connection with this Church was dissolved in December, 1822. The reorganization of the system of theological education in Yale College, restoring the original design of the

institution by giving to it a distinct Faculty of Theology, was in part the result of his great success in preaching the Gospel, and of those theological studies of his which were identified with the power of his ministry. There were those who believed that one so gifted as he was for the systematic exposition of Divine truth, and so successful in winning souls, ought to have the opportunity of employing his gifts, and of turning his experience and skill to the best account, in the special work of training men to preach the Gospel. I think I do not speak at random when I say that the Dwight professorship was founded for him, and that the Theological Department was planned with the expectation of making him a teacher of theology. At the age of thirty-six, he relinquished the pastoral office, and with a physical constitution seriously impaired by the intense and long continued mental excitement which had characterized his ministry, he entered on his new employment. His lecture room was soon filled; and his pupils, fascinated with the charm of his enthusiasm in the sublime science which he taught, were themselves enthusiastic in their admiration of his teaching. This is the thirty-sixth year of his service in that chair of instruction. In all, he has had nearly seven hundred pupils. Of these, not a few have been—not a few are now—widely honored for their work's sake. Their usefulness in the field, which is the world, is the expansion and perpetuation of his. Their grateful remembrance of him—their affectionate testimony to the exciting and guiding power of his great mind—is his living monument.

His retirement from the pastoral office did not imply in his thought any relinquishment of the work of the ministry. For a long course of years, his weekly labor in the pulpit was almost without interruption. To the congregation of his former charge he continued to preach, at the invitation of their committee, with great frequency, and to their great satisfaction, till he suspected that his readiness to do so was diminishing their sense of the necessity of choosing a new pastor. Only a year and a half after the settlement of his successor, he began to preach (Sept. 1826) to the Third Congregational Church, then just instituted, and till 1830 he was, in effect, though not in form, its pastor. For nearly a year he preached, statedly, to the North Church in Hartford. In the memorable year 1831, his labors, as a preacher, were abundant in these churches and elsewhere; for in the wide religious awakening of that year, such preaching as his was greatly sought after. There is no Congregational church in this city, almost none in this neighborhood of churches, which has not, in some vacancy of its pastorate, sought and enjoyed

his powerful ministration of the word. Probably in every one of these churches there are some who acknowledge, with grateful sensibility, the deep impression which the Gospel, ministered by him, has stamped upon their spiritual being forever.

Others may speak, elsewhere, of his theological controversies, and may criticise the peculiarities of his philosophical and theological system. But I may be allowed to say, that those who knew him best, know how painful controversy, as distinguished from discussion, was to him. He loved discussion; his mind rushed to an argument like a war-horse to the battle; he rejoiced in the well-guarded statement and strenuous defense of truth; his intellectual nature exulted in the discovery of a latent inaccuracy; he had an instinctive and ineradicable confidence in the power of logic to convince; but controversy, with its personal alienations, its exasperating imputations, and its too frequent appeals to prejudice and passion, was what his soul abhorred. In the earnestness of debate he might charge an opponent with absurdity and nonsense; but it was not his wont to charge a brother with heresy, or to represent an unguarded statement or an inconclusive argument as identical with heresy. How well he continued to love old friends, whom the sharpness of theological difference had alienated from him, they can tell who remember his brotherly visit to the death-bed of the one whom he loved the most, and who, in a pious but erroneous zeal, had done the most to destroy his good name. There were no dry eyes in that chamber of suffering when Taylor fell weeping on the neck of Nettleton and kissed him.

I may speak the more freely in commendation of him as a theologian—and perhaps with the more weight—inasmuch as it is no secret that there are some points in his philosophy, and some principles in his method of solving certain difficulties in theology, which I have never been able to accept. Let me say, then, that he was the last, as the elder Edwards was the first, of the great masters in the distinctive theology of New England. When I speak of great masters in theology, I do not mean all who have been useful or eminent as instructors of candidates for the ministry, or who have powerfully maintained and defended the accepted truth. I mean those who have contributed to the progress of thought by more exact definitions and distinctions in theology. The names in that succession, from the elder Edwards, are few,—Hopkins, the younger Edwards, Smalley, Emmons, Taylor,—and the last, not least in the illustrious dynasty. We need not claim for any of those great names the honor of infallibility. We need not accept the opinions of any

of them as great discoveries, free from all mixture of error—but these men have been the great originators of thought in the progress of the New England theology; and their spirits rule us, and will rule us "from their sceptered urns."

The chief contribution which the last of these great masters has made to the progress and defence of theological science, is in the clearness and fullness with which his teachings has developed the distinction and mutual relations between God's all-comprehending providence and God's government over his reasonable and responsible creatures. Doubtless this momentous distinction was recognized in theology before he began to illustrate and apply it, just as the distinction between natural and moral inability was recognized before Smalley defined and unfolded it. But the effect of his teaching is felt to-day by theologians of various schools and systems, who have never consciously accepted any of his formulæ; and it will continue to be felt when the distinctive theology of New England shall have been merged in the general and united progress which the universal Church is yet to make in the knowledge of God and of the glories of his word.

But I may not dwell upon this particular aspect of what this servant of God has done in the work of advancing the knowledge of truth. After all, it was by his power as a preacher of the word, more than by any power which he exerted as a mere teacher of theology, that he was a burning and a shining light. Those sermons of his, which have been heard by so many thousands, especially in times of religious awakening—those strong and terrible appeals to the conscience of the soul unreconciled to God—those magnificent and more than Miltonic portraitures of God's government—those expostulations in the name of Infinite Pity—those thunderings and lightnings from eternity—these, in the deep heavy tones of that trumpet voice, and with the impressive flashes of that eye through which the soul looked out from beneath the "dome of thought"—these live in our remembrance, and will live in tradition after us—these live in the impression they have made on our immortal nature. It was in times of religious awakening and revival, that he loved to preach. His favorite sermons were composed under such excitements; and to his own mind every one of them was redolent with blessed memories of success. A revived, awed, anxious state of religious feeling, in the community, was needed, that they might have their appropriate surroundings, and might produce their legitimate effect. All his theology was shaped and framed with reference to the doctrine and work of the conversion

of sinners to God. If he could have had his choice, he would have said, Let me die in a time of religious revival. He would chosen that his funeral should be attended by a throng of souls awake and alive to the great realities of responsibility and eternity. He would have chosen that the silence of his coffin should preach to souls oppressed with the sense of need and guilt before God. In such a time as those in which he most loved to labor for Christ, he would have chosen to "depart and be with Christ, which is far better."

Five or six weeks ago, he ceased from all his active work; and like Aaron on the mountain, he put off his garments and lay down to die. More than once, when he was reminded of a former recovery from similar weakness, he replied, "No, I have done,—I can only wait, committing myself, like Stephen, to the Lord Jesus Christ." And so, waiting in humble trustfulness, he has passed away. Meanwhile, unconciously to him, a religious thoughtfulness and earnestness has been spreading through this community, once so highly blessed with his labors. May we not say he has died in the midst of a revival of religion? Let us bury him with thoughts like those with which a conqueror is buried on the field of victory. Are there not in this assembly many whose souls are, even now, poised on the choice between the world and God, between death and life? "O, that *those* lips had language!" O, for one more utterance of the voice which death has silenced! O, might we listen to him yet again, here, in his old place of power! But no; one by one, God's ministers must depart, to utter his word no more with mortal voice. Yet God remains. His mercy endureth forever. His Gospel remains with its offers and its promises. "Christ is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever." The one true light of the world, the sun of righteousness, shines on, while the lesser stars, that reflect his glory, fade and disappear.

"Nor sink those stars in empty night,
But lose themselves in Heaven's own light."

A SERMON

PREACHED IN THE NORTH CHURCH, MARCH 14, 1858,

THE FIRST SABBATH AFTER THE DEATH OF

REV. NATHANIEL W. TAYLOR, D. D.

BY S. W. S. DUTTON, D. D., PASTOR.

HEBREWS XI. 3. "AND BY IT HE, BEING DEAD, YET SPEAKETH."

THE great English dramatist puts into the mouth of one of his characters this sentiment,

> "The evil that men do lives after them;
> The good is oft interred with their bones."

Very different is the testimony of God's word. While it does not deny that the influence of evil deeds and of evil men lives after them, it declares that the influence of good deeds and of good men, instead of being buried with their bones, lives after them with a special and superior vitality and power. Thus it is written, "The memory of the just is blessed, but the name of the wicked shall rot." God, by his providence and Spirit, watches over the good deeds and character of the righteous, preserving them in the minds of men, that they may speak with beneficial power to succeeding generations and ages. Thus four thousand years after the death of Abel, the sacred writer in text said of his righteous conduct; "By it he, being dead, yet speaketh." And it is equally true to-day, six thousand years after his death; "By it, he being dead, yet speaketh."

During the last week, in this city, there has passed away from among the living a Christian man, whom God richly endowed with the gifts of nature and of grace, and abundantly blessed with useful power. His eminent position as a pastor for many years, and as a preacher of Christ for nearly fifty years, in this community; his great influence for a third of a century as a teacher of sacred theology; his relation to this church and congregation, as one who, in the intervals of pastorates, has supplied your pulpit by his ministrations; and his relation to me as my teacher and friend, whose advice commended me to

you, and who by prayer and the laying on of his hands consecrated me here, in my youth, to your service for Christ's sake, in the work of the sacred ministry—these considerations strongly move me to improve this occasion by a sketch of his life and services, by which "he, being dead, yet speaketh."

He was born in New Milford, Conn., June 23, 1786, the son of Nathaniel Taylor, and the grandson of Rev. Nathaniel Taylor, who was for fifty-three years pastor of the Congregational Church in that town. He was named Nathaniel William—Nathaniel from his father and grandfather, and William from his father's brother, who graduated at Yale College in 1785. He fitted for college with Dr. Azel Backus, pastor of the Church in Bethlehem, and afterwards President of Hamilton College, who in his family prepared for college many youth, especially of Litchfield county. I have often heard my father, who prepared for college with Dr. Backus at the same time with young Taylor, speak of his early promise and especially of his boyish beauty and amiableness. He graduated at Yale College in 1807, six years from the time of his entrance, having been interrupted two years by sickness.

It was at some time during his college life, in his senior year I think, that he became decidedly a servant of Christ. Respecting that event I have heard him make a statement which is very instructive and monitory. There was a classmate and particular friend of his, who at the same time, by the working of the divine Spirit, was concerned for his eternal interests. The two friends communicated their feelings to each other. And one day, while walking together, they raised the question whether they should then call on President Dwight, who had invited all persons thoughtful upon religion to call and converse with him. At length, while still talking and doubting on that question, they came to President Dwight's gate. There they stopped and hesitated. At length Taylor said, "Well, I shall go in." "Well, (said his companion,) I think I will not, today." Taylor went in; and the result of his conversation with that eminent christian guide was that he gave himself to Christ in a covenant never to be broken, and became "a burning and a shining light" in his kingdom. His companion from that time thought less and less on the subject; and, though he lived for many years afterward, a respectable man, he died without giving any evidence of a saving interest in Christ. Such are the crises in the history of immortal souls. Such are the turning points in eternal destiny. Thus it is that companions travel together till they come to where they see plainly the open path

to Christ. They consider; they decide; the one taking the way to everlasting life, and the other pursuing the way to everlasting death. Oh, let all see to it that in these crises of eternal destiny, they act aright. Regard the divine warning, and heed the divine entreaty, "Quench not the spirit."

Mr. Taylor, after graduation, spent an unusual time for that period, five years, in the study of Theology; being two years of the time in the family of President Dwight, as his amanuensis and private pupil. In the year 1812, when he was twenty-six years old, he was ordained Pastor of the First Church in this city, as the successor of Professor Stuart, who had been removed to the newly established Theological Seminary at Andover. Ten years after, in 1822, when the corporation of Yale College, in strict accordance with the design of its founders that a chief object of the institution should be to prepare young men for the sacred ministry, established a theological school in connection with it, he was chosen, at the age of thirty-six, to the Dwight Professorship of Didactic Theology. This professorship had been endowed by the liberality of the late Mr. Timothy Dwight, the eldest son of Dr. Dwight, and was endowed by him chiefly that it might be filled by his admired friend, Dr. Taylor, who had already shown himself, both by his sermons and by his published defences of christian truth and doctrine, to be a master in sacred theology. In this position he remained until his death at the age of nearly seventy-two, a period of thirty-six years.

Dr. Taylor did not, however, on entering the professorship, relinquish preaching, which he greatly loved. He often preached to the students in college, especially in times of unusual religious interest, and he was always ready in his room to receive and direct inquirers in the way of life; and hundreds and hundreds of young men, afterward laborers in the Lord's vineyard all over this land and the world, have blessed God for his successful guidance of their awakened souls. When the Third Church was formed in 1826, he preached for them the greater part of the time till their first pastor was ordained, nearly four years. For the church which is now the College street Church, then the Free Church, he preached for a considerable period before the installation of the Rev. Mr. Ludlow. The pulpit of this Church he supplied a large part of the time during the interval of four and a half years between the pastorates of Rev. Mr. Merwin and Rev. Mr. Sawyer. When the Chapel street Church was organized, he preached for them. And then, whenever there was any unusual interest in religion, till his physical

vigor began to be impaired, he was ready to help, and on account of the great fitness and power of his preaching for such times, he was frequently called on to help, the pastors of the city. He has often been employed by the churches in neighboring towns, to supply their pulpits, when they have been destitute of a pastor. Very few are the churches in this county which he has not served in this way, and in which there have not been seals of his ministry. And few have been the Sabbaths during his long professorship, until the few years past of his advanced age, in which he was not engaged in his favorite employment of preaching the gospel.

Such is a brief outline of the life of Dr. Taylor, showing that not only the College, not only the Church of which he was once pastor, but all this community, and the people of many other communities, those to whom he preached in person, and those, far more numerous, to whom he has preached through the pupils whom he has taught to preach, have an interest and property in his memory.

The characteristics of Dr. Taylor's labors in the two departments in which he has been engaged as pastor and preacher, and as a teacher of theology, should receive our consideration.

Rarely has a pastor been so beloved by a people ; as is well attested by their treatment of him during the ten years of his ministry, and perhaps still more by the pertinacity and liberality of their affection for him during the thirty-six years after he left them. The reasons for this are plain. He was commended to them by his qualities both as a minister and a man. They knew that he loved their souls, and they admired the gifts and graces, the wisdom, love and power, with which he commended "the truth as it is in Jesus" to their hearts. And in his intercourse with them, as with all men, he was free, frank, affable, courteous, affectionate, free from all small and mean traits, liberal-minded, open-hearted and generous.

His physical qualities favored him much as a preacher—a fine expressive countenance, a beautiful and melting eye, and a powerful and sonorous voice. The first time I heard him preach, which was at the Commencement before I entered college, when he delivered his *Concio ad Clerum*, though I was a mere boy of fourteen years, and incapable of appreciating the intellectual merits of his discourse, there were some things which I could appreciate ; and the impression then made upon me that he had more of manly beauty than I had ever before seen, and was the prince of preachers, is vivid to this day.

The intellectual qualities of his preaching were thorough, lucid and scriptural exposition and discussion of his subjects; a full and frank meeting of difficulties; bold and powerful grappling with objections; fearless reference, in defence of Scriptural doctrine and precept, to reason and common sense; close and pungent applications to conscience; and earnest and touching appeals to the heart. He scorned to evade the difficulties of religion, and applied himself to their solution and removal. He never conceded the ground of reason to the infidel, but ever maintained, with triumphant confidence, the rationality of Christianity and the irrationality of infidelity and irreligion.

The language in which he clothed his thoughts was always elevated, yet terse and strong; and his imagination, though not exuberant, was vigorous, and sometimes, when his mind was filled and fired with divine ideas, it was truly Miltonic.

The truths which constituted the staple of his preaching were the excellent and glorious character and consequent authority of God; the nature, the righteousness and glory of the divine law and government; God's all-comprehending and beneficent providence; the guilty and lost condition of man on account of his unnecessitated and inexcusable sin; the magnifying of the law, and the provision of salvation, by the atoning sacrifice of the Redeemer, God manifest in the flesh; the necessity of the Holy Spirit's influence for the conversion and sanctification of men, and the motives, not to passivity but to action, involved in that truth; the universality, freeness and sincerity of God's offers of salvation, and his intense desire that they should be accepted; man's full power and consequent obligation, as a rational and accountable being, to obey all God's requirements, and of course to accept the offers of the gospel by repentance and faith; God's sovereignty in the bestowment of his Spirit; the terrors of the Lord in his wrath and everlasting punishment; the glories and joys of holiness and heaven; and the infinite pity and persevering love of Jesus Christ.

His preaching was specially designed and fitted to convict men of sin and lead them to Christ—to produce in them the beginning of a Christian life. This was the one point to which he made a large part of his preaching tend. A just criticism probably would say, that it was disproportionately devoted to this purpose—not enough to the edification, instruction and completion of the Christian character. This was owing to the fact that his ministry was in the early part of the era of modern revivals of religion, when the way of repentance and faith, of conversion to God, was confused and hedged up with theological

difficulties and inveterate obstacles in the public mind. He, therefore, turned all his mental powers upon the elucidation of the subject of reconciling sinful men to God through Christ by repentance and faith; and upon the doctrines and on the mental states and processes involved in that he shed great light.

In this special object of his preaching, the conversion of men, he was eminently successful, among his own people, and wherever he preached during his long dispensation of the word. In the time of "four days meetings," and "protracted meetings," and indeed in revivals of religion at every period, his labors were widely sought. There are doubtless many present who recollect, as I do, the impressive power of his sermons in the protracted meetings in this city in 1831 and 1832. No instrumentality at that period was more blest with success than his.

Such qualities of mind, and heart, and person, employed in the use of such truths, made Dr. Taylor one of the ablest preachers of his time. Indeed, for the effective presentation in a discourse of a solid body of pertinent scriptural truth,—for continued and powerful cannonading, more and more powerful to the end, on the fortress of the reason, the conscience, the will, and heart of those unreconciled to God, he had, in my judgment, no equal in his day among those whom I have had the privilege to hear.

We have seen that the chief part of Dr. Taylor's mature life, thirty-six years, more than a third of a century, he spent as a teacher of theology. In that period nearly seven hundred young men received his instructions, who have gone into all parts of our own country and the great missionary field of the world. A chief part therefore of any just estimate of his character and usefulness must consist in a right view of his character as a theologian and theological teacher.

One of his prominent characteristics, as a teacher, was his great confidence in the truth—in its reality and in its power. He regarded it as the instrument of divine wisdom, perfectly fitted for its avowed purpose of enlightening, convincing and correcting the understanding, and of moving and converting the heart; though he deeply felt, and always taught, that, owing to human sinfulness, perversity and obstinacy, it never has this effect unless attended by the Spirit of God. He had confidence in the power of all truth, but especially of the truth of God's word. He never allowed Christianity, so far as committed to him, to acknowledge any weakness, or to go begging in any respect, before the tribunal of truth and reason; but he always

challenged for it the fullest investigation before that tribunal, confident of victory in proportion to the fullness of the investigation.

This confidence in the truth, and in the capability of men under the divine guidance and assistance to know it and to defend it, he imparted to his pupils. He taught them to be thorough and independent thinkers—to call no man master, and to go for the truth themselves "to the law and to the testimony." This, doubtless, was right and wise; though it needed to be guarded against perversion—a perversion which has sometimes been seen, especially in the earlier ministrations of some of his students, in inordinate self-confidence, and a too liberal disregard of seniors and betters and good authorities. His method of instruction was one of the utmost freedom and frankness. He never dodged difficulties, nor evaded objections, but invited their free and full presentation and always met them kindly and fully. His mode was, after finishing his lecture of an hour, to invite questions, saying, "Now I'll hear you." And often for two hours after lecture I have seen him patiently and earnestly discussing the objections and difficulties of those who did not see the way clear.

Dr. Taylor aimed to make his students able to preach so as to bring men to repentance, faith and salvation. This was his chief aim. His theological instructions were to an uncommon extent clustered about the doctrine of regeneration—its nature, necessity, mode and means. This was natural. For when he entered on his professorship he came, as we have seen, from preaching in revivals of religion, and at a time when obstacles of a doctrinal and speculative kind in the path of repentance were far more prevalent than now. On the one hand was the plea of inability to repent and come to Christ, thoroughly believed, with some a natural inability or want of natural power, with others a misnamed moral inability, which differed from the other only in name—in either case a real and total *incompetency* to accept the offers of the gospel, and under the influence of which men felt that they had nothing to do but to wait for God to make them christians, or, as the phrase of the day was, "to wait God's time." Then there was the objection that God had wholly decided the case for them by an eternal and irresistible decree of election or reprobation; and the only reasonable course for them was to wait for its execution, in the use of such means of grace as reading the Bible, prayer and attendance on the Sanctuary. We have little idea, in these days, of the prevalence and strength of these obstacles as long ago as

the earlier part of this century. I have often heard my father say that in his childhood and youth he was educated in the full conviction that he could do nothing effectually to become a christian; and earnestly desiring to be a christian, and having received the impression that in the millenium all could become christians if they would, he used anxiously to reckon whether the millenium would come in his lifetime; for should he live till then, he could accept the offers of the gospel. On the other hand was the Hopkinsian doctrine that it was sinful to use the means of grace, and that all the acts of the unregenerate man are sinful—that all his trying to repent, by prayer or otherwise, is only an abomination to God. These objections and obstacles Dr. Taylor had cleared away in his own ministry; and he felt the importance of enabling his students to clear them away, and to teach that the path is open to come at once to Christ by repentance and faith; that what God commands man to do, man can do; and that the Holy Spirit is graciously bestowed, not to give him natural power to do it (for that he has as a rational and accountable being) but to overcome his unwillingness or disinclination to do it. And this cherished purpose he accomplished. His students did learn how to show the open way to Christ and to press men to immediate repentance; and they were very successful, especially his earlier students, in converting souls to God. No doubt his influence, by his preaching, his publications, and through those whom he taught, has been, in large part, the cause of the changed condition of the public mind respecting the practicability of coming at once to Christ by repentance and faith.

Dr. Taylor greatly excelled in what may be called the analytic way of teaching.

He had been a close student of the human mind, especially in the light of the Bible and actual life; and he had a profound, comprehensive and discriminating knowledge of mental states and operations, particularly with reference to morals and religion. Hence he was able accurately to analyze the acts and conditions of the mind in religion—to take a mental act or state to pieces, so to speak, and show its parts and processes, and whole nature, and how to do it, or to undo it. For example, repentance or conversion to God—he would show what it is, and would so unfold its constituent parts and processes that an inquirer would know what was to be done by him in becoming a christian, and how to do it. He did not stop with the direction, "Repent and believe," which to most persons was a blind direction; but he would show them what it is to repent and be-

lieve, and the way to do it—how to take the first step, and the second, till, by God's help, it was done. How well I remember the time when I went to him, asking what I should do to be saved! I had talked with others—they had moved my feelings and increased my earnestness, and thus were of service; but they did not tell me what to do, so that I could understand it. They had told me to repent and believe; but they might as well have told me to go somewhere they did not know where: for I did not know what it was to repent and believe, or how to do it. He saw in a moment my difficulty. In his calm, kind and earnest way, he told me just what it is to become a christian. He showed me the way to Christ by repentance and faith, step by step, so that it was plain; and I felt that I could go right to my room and fall on my knees, and by God's help, *do it.* I have never seen the man who had anything like his skill in dealing with inquirers for the way of life. And it consisted chiefly in his knowledge of the states and operations of the human mind, and in his analytic way of presenting it. By his preaching, and writing, and especially through those whom he has taught, he has, with others like him, been instrumental in making the way to Christ and salvation far more plain and practicable than it used to be. It has not been made more easy, in the sense of diminishing, in the least, conviction of sin, or of the strength and stubbornness of the human heart in its wickedness and aversion to God; but more easy, in the sense of being more *plain*—in other words, by answering more fully and particularly and practicably the great inquiry, "What must I do to be saved."

The central peculiarity of Dr. Taylor's theological system may be described thus. He so represented the divine side and the human side of religion as to make them harmonize—as to render theology consistent with itself and with all known truth. While he admitted that in so profound and comprehensive a subject as theology, the science of God and his government, there are mysteries, or things above and beyond our understanding, he abhorred and scouted the idea that there are in theology contradictions and absurdities—things which we see and know to be contradictory or absurd. While he maintained firmly the doctrines of human depravity, or sinfulness, and that by nature, of God's foreknowledge and foreordination of all events, of his electing grace, of the sovereignty of his Spirit, and of the perseverance of his saints, he so presented them as that they did not contradict the equally true and scriptural doctrines of human freedom, and just accountability. That doctrine of human

freedom, which he justly defined, not merely and only as liberty to do as we will, but also as liberty to will, power to will either way, he illustrated, and fortified, and defended, and carried through all parts of his system of morals and theology.* The result was the removal of many difficulties in theological science, and greater freedom and power in manifesting the truth to the consciences and hearts of men.

This feature of his theological system at one time was regarded with alarm, very much through misunderstanding, and he was called Arminian and Semi-Arminian. But time has fully proved that his mode was altogether the best for the refutation of Arminianism; while it has done much to bring some who are called Arminian, some among the Methodists for example, to a substantial reception of many of the doctrines which they had rejected; and thus it has helped on the harmony, which, we may hope, may at some time be complete between different parts of the one flock of Christ.

One peculiarity of Dr. Taylor's system of theological teaching, subordinate to the general one already mentioned, yet so important as to deserve special notice, was his solution of the difficult problem of the existence of sin, under the government of a wise and benevolent God. The common solution had been that God chose and ordained the existence of sin, when he might have prevented it in a moral universe, because it was the necessary means of the greatest good—because he could do more good with sin than he could without it. This solution Dr. Taylor rejected with all his heart, as dishonorable to God's truth and sincerity, as contrary to the divine law and to all rational views of government, of the nature and tendencies of sin and of holiness, and of known facts. He insisted that God, so far from regarding sin as that without which the highest good could not be done, regards it as good for nothing anywhere, as evil and only evil everywhere, in all its tendencies and relations; and therefore he does not wish it, ever, or anywhere, but forbids it everywhere, and laments it whenever and wherever it occurs. His solution of the difficulty was that sin comes in, as a necessary and unavoidable result of such materials as God uses in a moral universe—to wit, free agents—that notwithstanding all that can be done, short of breaking down the freedom he has given, and thus contradicting himself, sin will come in somewhere in the moral realms. Whatever may be thought of the

* With reference to the statement, "They can *if they will*," he used to say, in his terse and strong way, "They can *if they wont*."

correctness of this solution of a difficult question, it must be admitted that it gives the preachers of God's word freedom consistently to represent sin as, everywhere and in all its relations, the abominable thing which God hates; which freedom surely they can not have under the solution which he rejected.

A large part of Dr. Taylor's power as a preacher, and as a teacher of theology, consisted in his profound, comprehensive and sublime views of God as lawgiver and moral governor; that is, governor by law and authority. Out of these grew his impressive views of law, of moral obligation, of the excellence of obedience, of the evil and guilt of sin, of the penalty of the law, and of the atonement, which takes the place, as the expression of God's mind, of the penalty, in the case of the penitent and pardoned. These views were not new with him, for they have been propounded from the time of the younger President Edwards; but by him they were enlarged, confirmed and elucidated, and have been the most successful of the means, by which those errors which come under the name of Unitarianism have been withstood, and in a great measure subverted.

As Dr. Taylor never published any of those profound lectures, by which he taught ethics and theology, it is impossible for those who have not attended his lectures adequately to appreciate him. But the greater part of those who have had this means of knowing him, and are also familiar with the New England theologians, beginning with the elder Edwards, will estimate him as the ablest of them all. Such certainly is my judgment; and such will be, I doubt not, the general verdict, when his works are published.

Having said this, I must also say, in the spirit of fair criticism, that there is one part of his theological system which, in my view, will not bear the test of time and of light. That is the self-love theory, or desire of happiness theory, as it has been called; viz. that all motives that come to the mind find their ultimate ground of appeal in the desire of personal happiness; and that the idea of right in its last analysis is resolved into a tendency to the highest happiness. This theory, though advocated by him, was not peculiar to him, and never should be attributed to him as a peculiarity. It was plainly taught before him, by Dwight ,and the elder Edwards; though, with his accustomed frankness and boldness, he gave it, perhaps, greater prominence than they. But improvement in theology is not ended: in theology not as it is in the Bible—that can not be improved—but theology as it exists in the apprehension, interpretation, and exposition of men. And one of the improve-

ments, I confidently trust, will be the general acknowledgment that the idea of right can not be wholly resolved into the idea of expediency or utility; and that the idea of right and the sense of duty, are as real, and as *ultimate* grounds of appeal or motive in the mind, as the desire of happiness.

The greatest mistake, in my judgment, which Dr. Taylor has made in his theological life, was in spending so much of his precious time as he did, when so often attacked, in proving himself orthodox according to human standards. Whether one is orthodox according to the Bible, God's standard, is a worthy question; whether one is orthodox according to varying and imperfect human standards, is a very inferior if not wholly worthless question. The time thus spent by him, though he was completely successful, would have been far better employed in elaborating, and elucidating, and fortifying by the word of God and right reason, his own views of truth, and letting his reputation for orthodoxy take care of itself; or rather in letting God take care of it, whom he was endeavoring to glorify.

Still the mistake was natural and almost unavoidable: for he and many others thought that the usefulness and even the existence of the theological institution, in which he was a teacher, would be sacrificed by the numerous assaults made upon his theological reputation, unless he defended himself, and maintained his orthodoxy according to the standards of New England theology.

But it is time to close. It is pleasant to know that our beloved and admired friend's intellectual vigor did not fail before he was withdrawn from his active sphere. Even after he was confined to his house and his bed, his mind would fire up into a sacred fervor and eloquence, when he dwelt, as he often did, on his sublime views of God and Christ, of the law and the gospel. Such views made him regard as trifling the financial losses which have occupied so much of the public attention during recent months. In one of the last walks which he took in his feebleness, he met an old and familiar friend, who referred to those losses. "And what are they?" said he, with rising voice and kindling eye. "Should we not, like Paul, count all these things as dross that we may win Christ? What though the whole world should fail? It will work out for those who love Christ a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." And thus he pursued the theme till he arrived at his house.

He felt to the last an unabated and even an increased interest in those views of divine things, which he had endeavored to

present in his teaching; and said that he did not know how to die, there was so much more which he thought he could do here. When he became unable to read his lectures himself, and even during the two and a half weeks of his confinement to his bed, he used to request his daughter to read to him this and that one which he would indicate. Of one of them, the last which he wrote, written not more than two months before his death, his wife said to him: "How I wish that could be put into the form of a sermon and that you could preach it!" "And O, how *I* wish it," said he—"O that I could be permitted to preach again, and to preach to ministers!"

His gradual decline for several weeks was attended by his calm and trustful confidence in the grace of God in Christ and in the ministration of the Spirit, which he had spent his life in setting forth to his fellow-men. He said, "I wish to go, saying, as the martyr Stephen did: 'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.'" After his mind through bodily weakness began to wander, his thoughts were upon divine truths and heavenly glories, and in a half unconscious way he frequently repeated the stanza,

> "See Salem's golden spires
> In beauteous prospect rise!
> And brighter crowns than angels wear,
> Which sparkle through the skies!"

A few days before he died, and while he was in full possession of his mind, he called to his bedside his wife,* (between whom and himself, as all the friends of the family know, there existed the most devoted, simple and beautiful affection) and, taking her hand, he said very earnestly, and in that plain Saxon style which he was so accustomed to use: "I shall not be with you long; and when I am called to go, I want you to be very calm and very quiet, and to *let me go;* and the widow's God will be your God." He had a strong aversion to an exciting death-bed scene.

Calm and quiet was the scene of his death, even beyond his wish. He passed away so quietly that it was not known when

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* He was married Oct. 15, 1810, to Rebecca Maria Hine, of his native town, New Milford, Conn. She was of his kindred, the daughter of his cousin. Her maternal grandfather and his mother were brother and sister, of the name of Northrop. Passing their childhood together, they were early joined in devoted affection. Referring to this early attachment, Dr. Taylor once said to a friend that they never were *engaged*, for there was never any need of it.

he died. His attendants, not long after midnight, had helped him to an easy position, and took their seats, leaving him apparently asleep. One of them made the remark that he was sleeping more quietly than usual, and after some time had elapsed, saying that he had slept longer than usual, he went to him, and found that he was dead. So the poet's phrase was literally true respecting him,

"They thought him sleeping when he died."

He is dead; and the places which have known him here will know him no more forever. But though dead, like righteous Abel, HE YET SPEAKETH.

Oh, that we, my christian friends, may regard his words, as they sound down to us from the past, exhorting us to be earnest in prayer and labor for the salvation of men. And, O, that you, who are out of Christ, would regard his words—those divine words, from which he used to speak with so much eloquence and power. "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have eternal life." "God is angry with the wicked every day." "Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die? turn ye, turn ye, for why will ye die!" "Make you a new heart and a new spirit." "Is he not thy father that hath bought thee, hath he not made thee and established thee?" "Quench not the Spirit." "Now is the accepted time, and now is the day of salvation." Through his words let memory preach to you, and preach not in vain.

A SERMON

PREACHED IN THE CHAPEL OF YALE COLLEGE, MARCH 14, 1858,

THE FIRST SUNDAY AFTER THE DEATH OF

REV. NATHANIEL W. TAYLOR, D. D.,

Dwight Professor of Didactic Theology.

BY GEORGE P. FISHER,

Livingston Professor of Divinity.

DANIEL XII. 3. AND THEY THAT BE WISE SHALL SHINE AS THE BRIGHTNESS OF THE FIRMAMENT; AND THEY THAT TURN MANY TO RIGHTEOUSNESS, AS THE STARS FOREVER AND EVER.

WHAT glorious promises are held out, in the Bible, to those who spend their lives in bringing sinners to God! They are pronounced blessed even in their persecutions. Having a part in the sufferings of Christ, they go to reign with Him on high. They are forever lifted above the troubles of this dying existence, as the firmament is exalted above the earth. In the sphere to which they are removed, they are like the stars set in the tranquil sky. No man can pluck them down out of the hand of the Father. They are together there in heaven, shining on one another, with a mingled radiance, reflected from "the Lamb who is the light thereof." They do not die and pass away like the inhabitants of the earth, but they resemble the stars which have held their course undimmed, from the morning of creation until now. Their life is everlasting—an everlasting progress in knowledge, and purity, and blessedness. Yea, when the stars shall fall, and the heaven depart as a scroll, the Apostles of God will continue, near their Redeemer forever and ever!

We cherish the hope that the venerated father whose body we have lately committed to the grave, was a true minister of Christ; and that Christ was with him, according to the promise, unto the end, and that now he is with Christ in the mansions prepared for His followers. We honor the Creator when we recognize any real excellence to be found in his creature. We honor the Saviour when we admire the fruit of his grace, and

contemplate the work of those whom he has led by the hand. Only let us keep in mind the words of John the Baptist, himself "a burning and shining light:" "A man can receive nothing except it be given him from heaven."

Grant me your attention, while I attempt to delineate the virtues of the deceased, and interweave the leading circumstances of his life and death.

Nathaniel William Taylor was born in the town of New Milford, Connecticut, on the 23d of June, 1786. His ancestors were from England. His grandfather, for whom he was named, was the pastor of the town upwards of fifty years, and a member of the Corporation of this College about half that period—from 1774 until his death. He was a vigorous preacher, a wise and affectionate counsellor, and an ardent friend of liberty. During a part of the old French war, he was chaplain of a regiment of Connecticut troops; and his farewell sermon to the soldiers, preached at Crown Point, is an evidence both of his patriotic zeal, and his christian fidelity. His family were possessed of wealth. Two of his sons were graduates of the College; but the father of our departed friend was a farmer, and a highly respected citizen in his native town. There Dr. Taylor spent his early years. As a boy he was remarkable for his strength of body, and the activity of his mind. In every school to which he was sent, as his contemporaries remember, he was seen at the head of his class. An excellent mother made him, her youngest son, the object of a love peculiarly tender and watchful. Time never wore away her image from his grateful heart. For out-of-door sports, like hunting and fishing, he acquired a hearty relish, which he long retained. His especial fondness for domestic animals grew up in boyhood. He always took delight in his garden; and his uncommon skill in horsemanship, so well known to all his friends, gave him diversion in the midst of arduous studies. These characteristics may also be traced back to his early life.

He prepared for college under the tuition of Dr. Azel Backus, afterwards President of Hamilton College, who had established a select school for boys in his parish at Bethlehem. He was a man of original and decided character, with much intellectual force and depth of feeling. He became strongly attached to his young pupil; and I have heard Dr. Taylor describe a meeting which he had, soon after he had begun to preach, with his old instructor, when Dr. Backus, placing his hand on the shoulder of his youthful friend, expressed in a very simple and touching manner—the tears flowing down his cheeks—the joy

he felt at the report of his success. Dr. Taylor entered college in 1800, when he was only fourteen years of age; but he was soon attacked with an affection of the eyes, which compelled him to leave. He came back and joined the next class, but he was again obliged to lay aside study, for the same cause. Once more he returned, in the autumn of 1805, so far recovered as to be able to finish the course, and graduate in 1807. But his repeated disappointments, involving the loss of three years, had, for the time, chilled his aspirations, and he resumed his studies in the third instance rather to gratify his parents, than with any hope, or intention, of becoming a scholar. He said, himself, concerning this period: "Though I had previously felt an intense interest in study, I had, by that time, entirely lost it. Occasionally, however, my emulation was stirred; but it was to little purpose, as I had abandoned the thought of either doing or being much in future life." But this apathy was foreign to his nature, and could not long continue. It was in consequence of the encouragement which he received from Dr. Dwight, that he was aroused and inspired with fresh zeal for intellectual exertion. In his Senior year, he read in the presence of the class, and before the President, an essay on "The Foundation of Virtue." His classmates who had preceded him, had failed to apprehend the point of the theme; and the President had observed as each of them finished, that they did not understand the question, but after Taylor had read, the President remarked with great emphasis: "That is right,"—and added warm words of commendation, which made his young heart beat quick. His despondency was over; and to this event he attributed not only his revived enthusiasm, but also the direction which his studies afterwards took. The circumstance proves how much a few words of a teacher may effect, if spoken at the right moment. It was during his Junior year that he became interested in religion. His mind was profoundly agitated, and so painful were his convictions of sin, that Dr. Dwight feared that his reason would be deranged. He obtained, however, a faint hope in the mercy of God, which was kindled, as he once told me, by the affecting manner in which the President in one of his prayers in the chapel, quoted the passage: "A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench." But not until several years afterwards, when he had come to enjoy a more intimate intercourse with his revered guide, did he obtain a confirmed hope of everlasting life. His experimental knowledge of the guilt of sin, and of the awful condition of an unpardoned soul, gave rise to his solemnity in

expounding the moral government of God, and to the uncompromising earnestness with which he insisted on the doctrine of retribution. It was the testimony of his conscience given during his own personal struggle for salvation, that gave vitality to the deductions of his logic, and moved him towards them. The great source of religious influence over others, the source even of the best activity of a man's own intellect, is in the moral trials, and victories, through which he has gone himself.

During the next year after his graduation, Dr. Taylor was the private tutor of a son of Mr. Van Rensselaer of Albany, and spent several months in the city of Montreal, where he learned the French language. He then became a student of theology with Dr. Dwight, entering his family, becoming his amanuensis, and writing down, at the dictation of his teacher, most of the sermons which compose his Theological System. For this friend of his youth, his spiritual father, Dr. Taylor ever cherished a reverence such as he felt for no other man. May we not hope that both are now permitted to sit together at the feet of the Great Teacher! He obtained his license to preach in 1810, and entered on his work with the utmost ardor. Being called, soon after, to preach in his native town, with many young men among his hearers who had been his associates from childhood, he delivered a discourse from the text in John's Gospel: "If I say the truth, why do ye not believe me?" This passage is one on which, in after life, he was accustomed to dwell; one which he frequently repeated with peculiar emphasis. It is suggestive of the spirit with which he ever investigated the Gospel, and strove to bring his fellow-men to the same convictions with himself. It is Coleridge, I think, who observes, that a man who begins by loving Christianity more than truth, will love his sect more than Christianity, and be apt to end by loving himself better than either. Dr. Taylor was not of this class. He first loved the truth, and was a Christian, because he was thoroughly and conscientiously convinced that Christianity is true. There was something adventurous, almost chivalrous, in the tone in which he often avowed his readiness to go wherever the truth would lead him. All of his pupils will recollect certain sayings of his to this effect, and the gesture and the flash of the eye, which accompanied them. He had no faith for which he was not ready to give a reason. He addressed the understanding on all occasions, though his highest desire and ultimate purpose were to affect the feelings and change the will. Every sermon that he preached was an attempt to inculcate important truth, which he took care to establish by argument and evidence.

He deemed nothing gained, however his hearers might be interested, until their judgment was satisfied. He was unwilling to have them assent to what he said, unless they saw what they were agreeing to. Persons who came to him for spiritual counsel never failed to receive an intelligible, rational answer to their inquiries; a clear solution of their difficulties; and hundreds whom he has guided in this way, into the Saviour's kingdom, have thankfully testified to the lucid manner in which he explained to them what they had to do to be saved. He showed them the obstacles in their way, and they left him, in no doubt how to remove them. One of his most effective sermons was on the text "What is truth?" and none who have ever listened to it can forget how impressively the simple thought is presented, at the end, that the truth,—the great doctrines of religion,—is unaltered by the opinions of men, by their belief, or disbelief, but is everlasting,—a savor of life unto life, or of death unto death. Dr. Taylor had an enthusiastic confidence in the power of the truth, when fairly and earnestly proclaimed, to vanquish error. He despaired of no unbeliever who could be brought to lend a patient ear to reasoning. Many times I have heard him say that, were he a young man, he should be strongly inclined to go to Paris, and associate himself with students and educated men there, for the purpose of proving to them the claims of the Gospel. When fully possessed of a truth, he held it with an iron grasp, and it seemed to him a weapon "mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds." It was not in a vaunting spirit, but from a glowing faith in the efficiency of the truth, and a knowledge that the truth must win the day, that once, when he was a young man, he said in a familiar conversation, in reference to preaching, 'it seemed to him that he could turn the world round.' Let it not be thought that his high esteem of the truth crowded out the sense of dependence on God. On the contrary, his hope in the truth was founded on his habitual feeling that the Providence of God is ever working in favor of it, and that His gracious Spirit is seldom denied when good men are faithful. He shrunk with diffidence from any station that involved much responsibility, and consented to take the pastoral charge of the first church in New Haven, as the successor of Stuart, only in consequence of the almost imperative advice of Dr. Dwight.

He was ordained in April, 1812. His sermons were written in terse, idiomatic English, and in so plain a style as to be level to the mind of the humblest auditor. His published writings are not distinguished for perspicuity, but his sermons are. Many who

have merely been acquainted with his reputation as a philosopher, have imagined that his discourses to the people were abtruse dissertations, or bold speculations in theology. So far from this, they were made up of great, simple thoughts, clothed in a garb so perfect that it was not noticed, and enlivened by striking illustrations from the Bible, and from common life. Like some of the Epistles of Paul, and his recorded discourses, the sermons of Dr. Taylor were, to use a favorite phrase of his own, specimens of "fervid argumentation." They never omitted a close, searching, pressing appeal to the conscience. When he had brought his truth out of the Scriptures, and set it in such a light that every one saw it, he demanded, in the name of God, the assent and obedience of his hearers. He insisted on an instant compliance with every known obligation. He demonstrated the fallacy, and folly, of the excuses of impenitent men for living without God, and with every warning and every pathetic entreaty, urged them to immediate repentance. Dr. Taylor was pre-eminently a solemn preacher. He spoke in the manner of a prophet. His person was beautiful, yet commanding, and the deep tones of his voice accorded well with the momentous doctrines which he was commissioned to enforce. As the ambassador of God, he knew no fear of man. Since the days of President Edwards, no one has preached with greater plainness and directness of application, what some call the severe truths of religion,—like the justice of God in the eternal punishment of the wicked. Another side of the Gospel, however, he likewise loved to present. Among his most useful sermons were some of a different character,—such as that on "the goodness of God leading to repentance," and that on the text: "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." The pungency of his preaching excited discontent, especially at first; but after a while, some who had been loudest in their complaints, came to him trembling inquirers for the way of life, of whom, at least one, became a noted minister of the Gospel. The labors of Dr. Taylor in the pulpit were remarkably blessed. While he was pastor, frequent revivals of religion occurred, and each generation of the young, as it came forward, was converted and brought into the church. Out of the pulpit, in intercourse with his people, he was proportionally zealous and successful. He followed them into their houses with his prayers, and affectionate, serious admonitions. He was careful to make himself conversant with the religious condition of the members of his parish, and sought out opportunities to confer with them on the great subject of salvation. I may mention, for example, that he once

persuaded the young lawyers in town to meet together, and allow him to talk to them on the infinite theme. The love of his people for him knew no bounds; and as the generation to which he had ministered passed away, their children and children's children grew up in the same reverent attachment. It may remind one of of the affection of the church at Kidderminster for faithful Richard Baxter.

But Dr. Taylor's sympathies were not absorbed in his parish. In the other Congregational church in town, his influence was scarcely less marked. He frequently preached in other places, his aid being often desired in revivals of religion. Of his services as a counsellor in ecclesiastical affairs, both before and after he resigned the pastoral office; of his agency in founding and building up the younger churches in this city, and in the neighborhood; of the zeal and effect with which he continued to preach until he was disabled by bodily infirmity; and of the gratifying results by which his labors were commonly attended, I have not time to speak. In the revivals of religion which have occurred in college, he was exceedingly active and useful. During the revival here in 1831, he preached to the students twice every week, besides holding a meeting for inquirers. There is a large number of ministers among our graduates, together with many in other professions, who date their conversion from interviews with him. His quick discernment of the mental condition of those who applied to him for guidance, which it is often so hard for themselves to express, was only equalled by the ready wisdom, and the paternal kindness, with which he pointed out the path of duty, the narrow way which leadeth unto life. Many years ago, a young man who is now an eminent Professor in one of our theological seminaries, who had long suffered under religious despondency, happening to hear Dr. Taylor preach in Philadelphia, though a stranger to him, ventured to seek his counsel, and was at once relieved by his judicious and cheering advice. Within a few days, a well-known pastor in Massachusetts has detailed to me how, after being in darkness for months, he was aided in a similar way by this departed servant of Christ. These are but two of the numerous examples of educated men whom he was the instrument of turning to righteousness.

Dr. Taylor entered upon his Professorship at the foundation of the theological department, in 1822. At that time he had come prominently before the public as a preacher, and also as a theologian, having taken part in the Unitarian controversy, and contributed able articles to the pages of the *Monthly Christian*

Spectator. For the last thirty years, he has been chiefly known, beyond this vicinity, as a theological writer and instructor. Contrary to what is, perhaps, the general impression, he was, in the earlier period of his life, an industrious reader. He possessed himself of the most important and useful books in theology, which were then to be obtained, and he studied them thoroughly. In the solid, doctrinal writers of the period that followed the Reformation,—I refer now to the English writers,—he was well read. Probably none of his contemporaries was so well acquainted with the great divines of the New England school of theology, beginning with the elder Edwards. The principal works of President Edwards, Dr. Taylor knew almost by heart; and in controversy, he sometimes perplexed an opponent, by unexpected citations from this New England father, whose authority has been so high among us. Such authors as Calvin, Owen, and Turretin, he had studied; and, what is more, he had mastered, and could instantly refer to the passages which he might require in an argument. On the subjects of metaphysical theology in which he was most interested, he read the English controversial writers on both sides, and, in some instances, provided himself with rare works, which it was not easy to procure. A year or two after his ordination, he seriously considered the question, whether he would not give up his parish, and go to Andover, for the purpose of supplying what he deemed to be deficiencies in his culture. Not long before his death, he remarked to me, that 'he wished he were a young man; then he would learn the Hebrew and the German.' He did not profess to be a critical interpreter of the Scriptures; but he availed himself of such helps as were within his reach, and brought to the sacred text his vigorous common sense.

Dr. Taylor is supposed by many who did not know him well, to have been moved to his studies by the love of recondite speculation. This is an error. His motives, from the outset, were intensely practical. His inquiries relative to human responsibility, and the character and ways of God, were prompted by difficulties in his own religious experience, which he felt obliged to solve, under the alternative of giving up his faith. From a necessity of his own heart, his studies took their rise. He was driven, moreover, to seek for answers to current objections brought against the doctrines of the Gospel, for the purpose of disarming opposers. He desired a Christianity that could be preached with a fearless tongue. He wanted to go before his impenitent hearers, conscious of his ability to beat down every refuge which gave them shelter from the arrows of conscience. In philoso-

phy, he set no value on what could not be translated into language intelligible to plain men, and would not bear the test of common sense. He was constantly appealing to the common, unperverted judgment of mankind, as revealing the facts of consciousness. Severely rational, he was impatient of whatever bordered on mysticism, and paid little respect to any thought that could not be cast into a lucid proposition.

It is not for me, on this occasion, to criticise the principles of his Theological System. This I will say,—that he held with his whole heart, and taught from the pulpit, and from his chair in the seminary, the fundamental articles of the evangelical faith, which gave life to the Protestant Reformation, and form the substantial contents of the Gospel. A symmetrical system, compact and complete, ascending from the first axiom of mental science to the topmost doctrines of Revelation, he constructed. Its main outlines were sketched by him when a young man. I have seen an Essay, which will be found among his papers, written not long after he began his ministry, wherein the leading peculiarities of his theology, as it was developed later, are distinctly stated and defended. He is the author of a Theodicy—a justification of the ways of God to men. The agency of God in the existence of sin and holiness,—the relation of the Decrees and Providence of God to human responsibility,—the grand question which the New England divines have debated for a hundred years, was the theme of his discussions. Whatever difference of opinion may exist in respect to his conclusions, pertaining, as they do, to the most profound and mysterious problems which have ever engaged the human mind; however critics may dissent from his views, extending, as they do, over so vast a range of topics, candid men will admire his ability, and appreciate the integrity, and devotedness of his character.

Dr. Taylor combined two powers, seldom found together,—the powers of a metaphysician, and of an orator. His faculty of long-continued abstraction was wonderful; and the subtlety of his analysis strained the attention of the most acute of his pupils. His powerful mind found its recreation in those forms of activity, which to common men, are a most irksome task. In the department of intellectual science, he stands, by general consent, in the first rank. Yet, mixed with the accurate, reflective, keenly discriminating habit of his mind, and glowing beneath it, was the fire of an orator. He loved to convince others, and to carry them with him. In the presence of an assembly, even with but a few congenial listeners, his mind would kindle, and his manner become eloquent. Among his most stirring, as

well as instructive efforts, were the extemporaneous decisions which he was formerly accustomed to pronounce in the students' debating society, over which he presided. Indeed, his mind seemed always to be in lively motion; and it was his complaint through his whole life, that he could get but little sleep. When the night came, his brain refused to cease from its work.

If you look for the secret of the uncommon influence which he exerted over his students, you may find it, in part, in the personal traits which have been already named. They were struck, on their first acquaintance with him, with the superiority of his intellect. There was a fascination in the manifest independence of his character. It was evident that he called no man master. He taught them to throw away the authority of names, and to think for themselves. He stimulated them by putting his propositions in paradoxical and startling forms. He gave them to understand that he was not satisfied with the expositions of theology in the current treatises; and that he lectured, because he had things to say which had not been said before. He challenged them to examine all his teachings in the light of their own intelligence, to bring forward all the objections which they could think of, urging them to propose questions, and ending every lecture with the words: "Now I will hear *you.*" He made it clear that he was not discharging a mechanical function,—that he was not fettered by false notions of professional dignity, but that he was intent on his great object, and was ready to trample on any mere forms that might stand in his way. The courage of Dr. Taylor fascinated young men. For he was eminently courageous. He had never learned the trick of concealing his opinions. In controversy, he would know nothing of stratagem, but marched boldly up in the face of his antagonist. To the inuendoes of sly opponents, he replied with heavy blows. Conscious that his position was, in some respects, peculiar, his resolution to maintain it, and his confidence in his ability to do so, against all adversaries, never wavered for a moment. It was quite in keeping with the entire spirit of the man, when, in reference to a contingency that might require an armed defence of rights, he declared to a concourse of his fellow-citizens, that, old man as he was, he would be ready to shoulder his musket. When the Universalists came into his parish, and held meetings on two different occasions, with a view to a permanent organization, he went in uninvited, and having obtained leave to speak, he followed the preacher with such a refutation of his discourse, that they were discouraged from their purpose, although, the first time, they were so

angry, that they extinguished the lights before he had finished his remarks. In his later years, his pupils came to look upon him as a veteran, who had passed, with honor, through great battles in the cause of his Master, and listened, with delight, to the anecdotes of what he had done and suffered. But the chief charm of Dr. Taylor was his sincerity, and his affectionate devotedness to his students. They knew that he had no feeling towards them which he did not freely express. His heart was open: and how large and generous it was! He gave himself to his pupils, confiding to them everything in his mind, and in his history; spending hours after his lecture in discussion with them, or in friendly and instructive conversation; begrudging no time, precious as he deemed it, which they took from him. He loved young men. He loved their warmth, their willingness to look at new truth, their frankness, their bright hopes of the future. His tenderness was the more dear for the native dignity of his demeanor, and his entire freedom from the least taint of sentimentalism. To strangers, he did not always appear to have so kind a heart, and his love was the more beautiful as it came gushing through a thin crust of seeming austerity. He allowed no unseemly familiarity, and, when offended, he spoke out his rebuke on the instant, in blunt terms. But here the matter ended. No animosity lingered in his mind. This he appeared desirious to indicate by his marked kindness, afterwards, to any person who had incurred his censure. Not long ago, he mentioned to me that, the day before, he had reproved one of his class with more severity, perhaps, than the case required; expressing, at the same time, his grief, and adding, that he had been kept awake a great part of the night, by the thought that Christ would not have spoken so. Who will wonder that such a man drew to him the affections of his pupils? He has moulded the opinions of a great number of men, whom he has either instructed, or conferred with, on the nature of the Gospel. Through them, his influence has been widely exerted on the ministry of the various denominations throughout the country, modifying, everywhere, the type of theology, and the prevalent tone of preaching. There are many who do not subscribe to his philosophical tenets, and many more who know little of him, who still preach in a way quite different from that in which they would have preached, had he not lived. He has been properly styled the last of our New England Schoolmen,—in the special themes which absorbed his attention, in his method of handling them, and in the extent of his influence over the clergy, the compeer of Emmons and Hopkins, of Smalley and the Edwardses.

The animosities of theological strife die away. One generation stones the prophet, and the next builds his sepulchre. The memory of Dr. Taylor will be generally honored. His name will soon be historic; and the College where he was educated, and where, for thirty-five years, he has taught, will be proud to place it high on the list of illustrious divines who have adorned its annals.

They who knew Dr. Taylor best, do not need to be further reminded of the depth of his affections, and the religious earnestness that appeared in his daily life. He held a stern mastery over his feelings, but now and then they broke through the barrier, and the floods of emotion that poured forth betrayed the depth of the fountain. How he loved his family, those long nights spent in prayer, when temptation or distress was impending, are a touching witness. How his sympathies flowed out to his parishioners, their lasting gratitude, and the tears of gray-haired men who followed him to the grave, are a significant proof. The cordiality of his attachment to friends and pupils, is seen in the sorrow of so many, scattered over different States of the Union, and in distant lands, who will mourn as personally bereaved.

In the last days of Dr. Taylor, his well-known characteristics were strongly disclosed. His interest in political affairs, and in the passing events of the day, was undiminished. His enthusiasm for study outlived his strength. During the illness which confined him to his house about a year ago, he entered upon a laborious investigation of a difficult subject in Biblical Theology, and wrote out his results, amounting to an elaborate treatise. At the same period, I think it was, he occupied himself with the composition of an ingenious essay on the cosmogony of Genesis, as compared with the teachings of Geology. Of late, his strongest tie to life has been his concern for his family, together with his unquenchable love for his favorite studies. Dr. Taylor never touched upon his own religious feelings, unless he was naturally drawn to them by the current of conversation. He never alluded to sacred topics for form's sake, or from the conviction that he ought to appear pious. From that hateful species of affectation, he was utterly free. He was too spontaneous, too honest in everything, of too robust and sincere a nature, to fall into this weakness. In character, as in name, he was the Israelite in whom was no guile. Sometime since, when compelled by his infirmities to lay down his pen for the larger part of every day, he casually remarked to me that he occupied himself with religious meditation; to that kind of meditation,

he said, his strength was adequate. More recently, when fully aware of the near approach of death, he expressed his calm trust in God, and his desire to depart as Stephen did, uttering the petition: "Lord Jesus receive my spirit." To his best earthly friend, he said: "When the time comes for me to die, I want you to be perfectly calm, and when I am called to go, I want you *to let me go;* and the widow's God will be your God." In one of his last conversations, he indicated his unshaken faith in the doctrines which he had taught, and his conviction of their importance to the world. On the morning of Wednesday, March 10th, several hours before the dawn, unobserved by his attendants in the room, he fell asleep. His body has been committed to the earth; his soul is with God who gave it.

It is hard for me to realize the fact that Dr. Taylor is dead. I expect to hear his familiar step at my door. I expect him to come forward and greet me as I enter his house. I think of him as an aspiring boy, journeying to college from his father's house, his future career all unseen before him. I think of him, as a vigorous youth, grappling with the hard problem of Foreknowledge and Will, with the determination to solve it, or to die in the endeavor. I think of the beauty of his person and the majesty of his eloquence, when, in the centre of his manhood, great congregations hung on his lips in rapt attention. I behold him as I first saw him, an old man, but with spirits still buoyant, and all the energies of his mind in full exercise, discoursing, in his lecture-room, on the grounds of guilt, and responsibility to God. I see him as he was but lately, when, weary under the weight of his years, and his trials, he walked through the streets with slow and painful steps, pausing, here and there, to talk with some old parishioner on the things that pertain to the kingdom of God; and again, as he lay in weakness on the bed from which he never arose; and at last I think of his noble features on which death had set his seal. Yet, his life seems unfinished. It *is* unfinished. He has not died, but gone to another life, leaving the worn garment of mortality, which he needs no more. Dark clouds may settle on the face of the evening sky and seem to blot out the sun, while that luminary is rising on other regions, and rejoicing as a strong man to run a race.

Yet his earthly life is ended forever. Never again will he enter this sanctuary where he has so long bowed in worship. In these places where he has been seen for half a century, he will never more appear. That deep-toned voice is hushed in death. That tongue is silent forever. Soon all that was mortal in him

whom we honored, will be mingled with the dust. To see so much manhood fade away,—shall it not impress on us the vanity of the earth! Shall it not rebuke the pride of the young who feel strong and safe in their strength! "For what is your life? It is even a vapor, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away." Let this solemn event turn our minds to the true purpose of life, and teach us how worthless, by themselves, are all earthly things. Of what importance, now, to our deceased friend, are the admiration and reproach which he received, both in so large a measure, from his fellow mortals? In itself considered, of how little moment that he rose to an intellectual pre-eminence among them! Or even that he has built up, with so much toil, a theological system that is called by his name! That system, whatever value it may have at present, will be supplanted, and in time will pass away. For the truth does not abide in one form of expression: it is ever showing new phases, and casting off the alloy of error.

"Our little systems have their day;
They have their day, and cease to be;
They are but broken lights of Thee,
And Thou, O Lord, art more than they."

"Whether there be knowledge it shall vanish away; for we know in part." "For now we see through a glass darkly." In the light of eternity, our departed teacher may have learned more, in these last few days, than in his life-time before. He has left behind an influence; he has borne away a character. Our joy is not in his talents; in the productions of his intellect; or in his earthly fame; but our joy is in the belief that he lived to glorify God, and that his controlling purpose was to do good. We rejoice in the confidence that, in the great ends which he set before him, he was an obedient follower of the Saviour, patiently endeavoring to do His will and humbly trusting in his His mercy for salvation. And the source of the satisfaction with which we review his life, is the fact that he was employed, by the Redeemer, as an instrument of turning a multitude to righteousness. To the Redeemer be all the glory!

In concluding this imperfect tribute to my venerated and beloved teacher, let me urge the young men of this assembly, in whose welfare my heart is deeply interested, to follow him as he followed Christ. Not to disparage other occupations to which you may be inclined, what can you do more worthy, than to devote yourself, like him, to the work of a Gospel minister? What object can you figure to yourself so high as the turning

of immortal men from sin unto righteousness? Whatever self-sacrifice may belong to it, what work will, on the whole, yield you so much peace while you live? Contrast the life of a faithful preacher, in its lofty studies, its inspiring and delightful duties, with the thorny path of political ambition!

But aside from the consideration of temporal happiness, when the hour of death shall come—and it will come much sooner than you can now realize—what life will you wish to have lived? At the portal of the eternal world, as you look back on the past, what work will you be glad to have done? O, how unspeakable is the privilege of him who, in that parting hour, can take to himself the promise of the text? Blessed are they to whom it is given to turn many to righteousness, and to shine as the stars forever and ever!

OBITUARY NOTICE,

BY CHAUNCEY A. GOODRICH, D. D.

Professor of the Pastoral Charge in Yale College.

From the New Haven Daily Palladium, March 10, 1858.

DEATH OF REV. DR. TAYLOR.

DIED, in this city, March 10th, REV. NATHANIEL WILLIAM TAYLOR, D. D., Dwight Professor of Didaetic Theology in Yale College, in the seventy-second year of his age.

Although it has been known for some days that a great and good man was passing away from the midst of us, the tidings of Dr. Taylor's death will be received with no ordinary feelings by a large part of this community. There are few, comparatively, who can remember the time when he came to live among us. To nearly the whole of our active population he has *always* been here,—known of all as a man of pre-eminent abilities, justly regarded as one of the most powerful preachers of the age, sought out by the churches of his denomination as a wise counselor in their difficulties, revered and loved by his pupils for the clearness and depth and solidity of his instructions. Those who knew him in private life will naturally recur to his admirable social qualities, the frankness of his disposition, the generosity of his sentiments, the largeness of his views; his extraordinary conversational powers, his perfect independence and yet courtesy in differing from others, his richness and originality of thought, and his remarkable talent of giving lightness and variety to a discussion by passing "from grave to gay, from lively to severe." Those who enjoyed his friendship will dwell with deeper emotion on the warmth and constancy of his affections, the ready sympathy he extended to those around him in their trials and sufferings, and the strength they derived from his counsels and his prayers. All will unite in saying: "A great man has this day fallen among us!"

He was born at New Milford, Conn., in the year 1786, and graduated at Yale College in 1807. After residing for about two years in the family of Dr. Dwight, as his favorite amanuensis, he entered on the ministry; and was ordained pastor of the

First Congregational Church in New Haven, in April, 1812. How faithfully he discharged the duties of this office can be testified by some who remain among us, and is witnessed by the veneration and love with which he was regarded by the children and the children's children of multitudes who once sat under his ministry. His preaching was marked by extraordinary clearness, force, and pungency of application. He had great confidence, under divine grace, in the *power of truth*. Hence, he dealt with the hearts of men chiefly through their understandings; he enforced the claims of the Gospel, not by mere strength of assertion, but by vivid and luminous trains of reasoning; he turned the whole at last into an appeal to conscience; and the leading characteristic of his preaching was happily described by an eminent divine of Massachusetts: "He makes everything appear great: God, man, time, eternity!" His ministry was eminently successful. There were, in repeated instances, powerful and long-continued revivals of religion among his people; and these seasons of extraordinary interest were conducted with so much judgment, and care to avoid every kind of excess, that the whole community around saw and acknowledged that they were no mere ebullitions of excited feeling, but were marked by the peculiar presence of the converting grace of God.

When the Theological Department of Yale College was founded, in the year 1822, he was appointed Dwight Professor of Didactic Thology. But in accepting this office, he never thought for a moment of relinquishing the duties of the ministry. On the contrary, while preparing young men for the sacred office, he continued to preach in the churches of our city or neighborhood, with his accustomed fervor and success. For nearly a year, in 1825–6, he acted as the regular supply of one of the societies at Hartford, which was destitute of a pastor. As new Congregational churches have branched out from the two original societies on the Green, his counsels and aid have been called in for the furtherance of each successive enterprise. On some of them he bestowed an amount of labor which, if reckoned in continuous order, would make months and even years of pastoral duty. Hence, in all our Congregational churches, his departure will be felt as the loss of one who had endeared himself to the hearts of hundreds by his unwearied efforts for their spiritual good.

As a teacher in theology, it was his great object to make his pupils *think for themselves*. It required no ordinary effort to follow him through one of his lectures. They abounded in pro-

found principles and far-reaching views, which, to a reflecting mind, were eminently the "seeds of thought." A gentleman who exchanged the bar for the pulpit, once remarked, that never in the severest contests of the forum had he felt such a tension of his faculties, such a bracing and invigorating effect upon his mind, as in listening to the lectures of Dr. Taylor. Nearly seven hundred young men have enjoyed the benefit of his instructions. They are scattered throughout every part of the United States; and they will all testify that the great end at which he aimed in his theological system, was "to exalt God, to humble man, and to bring all to the cross of Christ."

Dr. Taylor died of no specific disease. He was simply worn out by hard study. About two months ago, he was no longer able to meet his class; and from that time he daily committed to one of their number a lecture to be read and discussed at their daily meetings. He told them his course was ended; and with a quiet and child-like submission to the will of God, he resigned himself to the prospect of a speedy death. To one of his friends he remarked, "My only hope is in the atonement of Christ; and my wish is to die with the words of the martyr Stephen on my lips, 'Lord Jesus receive my spirit.'" His closing hours were without struggle or suffering; *he rests from his labors, and his works do follow him!*

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